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SUBJECT: ANGOLA: YET ANOTHER STEP CLOSER TO ELECTIONS

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¶1. (U) On December 21, 2007 the Inter-ministerial Commission for the Electoral Process (CIPE) delivered the voter registration books to the National Electoral Commission (CNE), marking a major step towards the realization of Angola's first post-war elections beating its own December 31st deadline for doing so. In statements to the press, CNE President Caetano de Sousa promised the CNE would quickly certify the books, and for the first time publicly confirmed that the CNE will most likely propose September 2008 as the target for legislative elections. By law the CNE must report its certification of the registration books and its recommendation on the electoral calendar before President dos Santos can call elections. De Sousa did not estimate when the CNE would make its recommendation to President dos Santos.

¶2. (U) The CIPE and the CNE are also undertaking other needed tasks. Acting CIPE Coordinator Edeltrudes Costa noted that CIPE is prepping for a supplemental registration process between April and May 2008. Meanwhile, the CNE continues its strategic planning sessions, focusing on the logistical planning necessary to hold elections in 2008 (reftel).

¶3. (U) According to Costa, the 10,365 registration books list the 8,091,103 Angolans who registered during the registration process that lasted from November 15th, 2006 to September 15, 2007. Costa noted, however, that the total number of registered voters was subject to change, as over 2,000 cases of duplicate registration were found and over 41,000 adjustment claims were made during the registration review period. These cases remain under review.

¶4. (U) COMMENT: With the CIPE's "on-time" delivery of registration data and the CNE's public targeting of a September timeframe for elections, legislative elections are solidly on track for 2008. Nonetheless, questions remain about the CNE's preparedness (or, rather, lack of preparedness) for the huge logistical challenges of conducting their elections successfully. USG-funded assistance from IFES would be crucial in meeting the challenge. END COMMENT.  
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